



The European YWCAs

Newsletter #2 2013 European YWCAs Committee

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Dear YWCA Members,

Season's Greetings!

As we are all preparing for the Festive season we would like to wish you a merry and peaceful Christmas. We share our second Newsletter with much joy and cheer as we provide an update on the committee activities and engagement and also news from our members.

As was recently announced, Anna Magnusson has decided to step down as President; however she still remains a committee member. As a result, Nina Meiling has been appointed President. Nina is a Board member of both the European Committee and the YWCA of the Netherlands. This action was taken within the Committee itself, according to European YWCAs Constitution:

Vacancies

52. In the event of a vacancy in the position of President, the European Committee shall appoint a committee member to fill the vacancy.

The Committee is fully confident that this will be a smooth transition for the European YWCAs and that Nina will successfully lead the European YWCAs.

"I am really looking forward to this coming year. I am eager to fulfil my role as President and ensure that we will organise an amazing European Regional Meeting in October 2014. I am fully confident that with all the support of the Committee, the World YWCA, and all the Member Associations, we will meet the goals that were described in the year plan during the European Regional Meeting 2012. I hope that you have faith in me and that I can count on your support." – Nina Meiling.





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The Committee would also like to inform members of the Facebook group: EUROPEAN YWCAs, that has been established, and we encourage you to join this group. This is a closed group, by invitation only; therefore you need to LIKE the European YWCAs Young Women Facebook page first by clicking on the link below:

<https://www.facebook.com/EuropeanYwcaYoungWomensSummit?filter=2>

"We have created this group to improve the communication between the Committee and the Member Associations and also as a tool for Associations to communicate with each other. We would love to hear from you know what is happening in all the organisations, and please share all your successes and struggles, as we can all learn from each other."- Nina Meiling.

Wishing you all a peaceful and joyful Christmas!

Nina, Anna, Irina, Gitte and Nora.

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Last committee meeting November 2013

By Marcia Banasko, World YWCA.

The European YWCAs Committee held their second meeting early in November 2013. The Committee came together to review progress made so far in the implementation of the European YWCAs Strategic Plan 2013-2016, identifying key advocacy events, trainings and opportunities for engagement across Europe.

The meeting was held over three days at the World YWCA office, in Geneva, Switzerland with support from Marcia Banasko, World YWCA European YWCAs Administrator.

The Committee revisited the adopted Strategic Plan and Work plan for 2013-2014, focusing on strengthening partnerships and national movements, promoting the rights of women, young women and girls, increasing young women's participation in decision-making structures of European bodies, opportunities for mutual learning and exchanges in priority areas, fund-raising, and resources. The main focus of the meeting was around institutional strengthening and fostering of partnerships to best support the European YWCA movement and member associations. **From October 15th-19th 2014, the Committee will hold the European Regional Meeting, hosted by the YWCA of Germany.** Therefore, the Committee undertook initial planning discussions and will inform member associations early 2014, of the registration process and relevant procedures regarding the business meeting of the European Regional Meeting.

The Financial Report was delivered by European YWCAs Committee Treasurer Gitte Berle. Gitte highlighted various fundraising opportunities and the committee have drafted a fundraising strategy.

Update from our partners European Youth Forum (YFJ)

By Pauline Musoke, YWCA of Great Britain

Pauline Musoke, from the YWCA of Great Britain recently attended the *Youth Summit for Quality Jobs: At the Margins of the Intergovernmental Conference on Youth Employment*. Pauline represented the European YWCAs at the conference and shared the following:

“The President of France decided to organise a high-level intergovernmental conference as a follow-up to the Youth Employment Summit convened in Berlin on 3 July, 2013 by the German Chancellor. At the margins of this event there was a youth summit. In other words, we were having a parallel summit on youth unemployment that would feed into the high-level intergovernmental conference that was held simultaneously. The aim of this occurrence is to allow young people to make their voices heard on issues of youth employment, to encourage free expression, activism, and to utilise this time to engage in constructive input with the Intergovernmental Conference.

This was a very eventful occasion indeed, with lots of intensive discussions from powerful voices. My sole recommendation would be to urge our member organisations to lobby for the implementation of Youth Guarantee in their countries (perhaps working with their youth MPs). At the same time, they ought to recognise the gendered differences that come with youth unemployment and that young woman are far more likely to fall into poverty because of the unequal structures of societies.”

YMCA Europe

By Nina Meiling, YWCA of Netherlands

In a recent meeting with YMCA Europe, the European YWCAs was able to discuss partnership opportunities and networks across our two organisations. YMCA Europe has a three pillar strategy for five years 2012-2016:

1. Peace/Justice/Democracy
2. Healthy Living
3. Inclusive Christianity (e.g. interfaith dialogues)

As an organisation, they have taskforces which focus on sports, scouting, Christian orientation, Youth policy, YES (European spectrum for leadership). Their General Assembly is always on Ascension Day (in 2014: 28 - 29 May) and we are invited to join! It is going to be held in the Czech Republic.

Member Associations: Danish YWCA and YMCA

By Gitte Berle, YWCA of Denmark

In November 2013, YMCA and YWCA members from across the country gathered to join SEMINAR '13. In three days they learned, developed and got inspired in body, mind and spirit. In total 240 participants took part in the intergenerational seminar.

The programme was very comprehensive and intense with members choosing between different kinds of sessions. Some learned how faith can be used as an active resource in everyday life, some about how you can live a more active and energised life, and some had sessions about mindfulness and the power of thought. The seminar was held in the outreach of Denmark where the participants could fully enjoy the opportunity to relax, focus on and discuss issues across regions, genders and generations. They played sports together, sang, danced, laughed, learned and developed. It was indeed a wonderful and inspiring weekend.



International seminar “Gender aspects of success” By Iryna Rodygina, YWCA of Ukraine

On 1-2 June, 2013, in co-operation with YWCA-YMCA of Sweden (KFUK-KFUM), YWCA of Belarus, as part of the Belarusian and Swedish project *Youth in Development-3*, carried out an international seminar *Gender Aspects of Success* in a picturesque countryside Olympic complex in Stayki, Belarus. 16 members and volunteers from the YWCAs of the Ukraine and Belarus took part in the event and shared their research results and ideas on the topic. Before the event, all participants had a chance to think of their own definitions of success and to interview one person (female) whom they considered to be ‘successful’. The first part of the seminar was dedicated to these interviews. After listening to them, everybody could analyse how



and why each woman became successful. A psychologist was also invited to the seminar and gave her professional opinion on the topic.

Part of the event was dedicated to group work which gave the participants an opportunity to share their ideas of the characteristics of a successful women and her lifestyle. They combined these characteristics to create a unique personality of a successful woman. It was nice to hear similar ideas on the subject.

While describing the successful woman most of the participants from different cities of Ukraine and Belarus talked about the ability to combine professional activity with personal and family life. During the group work the participants realised that successful women have some traditional/stereotypical ‘masculine’ character features such as firmness, forcefulness and purposefulness.

There was one definite conclusion made –a successful woman is motivated and determined. She is an active person who aims to be better at her job as well as other spheres of life, to work on her skills and knowledge. A successful woman constantly



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improves herself, setting and reaching bigger and bigger goals and working on her self-development.

The YWCA of the Netherlands

By Jolien Roetman, YWCA of Netherlands



On 14 November 2013, over 20 women came together at the YWCA of the Netherlands for the first edition of the Y-clothes exchange.

We invited women with the question: *Do you have any clothes in the closet that you almost never wear, but with which you could make someone else very happy?*

Everyone collected bad buys, jewelry, shoes, belts and other accessories that still looked good and brought them to exchange for an entirely new wardrobe! Cost: 5 euro. Provided with a snack and a drink we threw all the clothes onto a pile and then...rummaged through!

The proceeds of the evening went to support a project of an organisation for refugee women that take place at the YWCA house. The remaining clothes were brought to an organisation that helps people out of problem situations, especially the homeless, offering them the opportunity to rebuild their lives.

The evening was a great success! Refugee women from the Quality Centre came halfway through the evening to seek out some clothes as well. Everyone went home happy, with nice new clothes. We will definitely organise this again!

YWCA Ireland

By Audrey Wilson, YWCA Ireland

YWCA Ireland is part of the European Youth Forum's (EYF), Membership Growth Project and has been participating in various capacity building and outreach trainings. Since the last meeting in Tallin (in September 2013) YWCA Ireland has established a Membership Growth

working group. As a working group we are currently observing various areas of YWCA Ireland's structure/practice focusing on communications, the process of becoming a member/volunteer and our volunteer management structure. We are using a variety of tools to do this, some provided by the EYF and some locally sourced here in Ireland. The project to date has been an interesting process and I personally am confident that there will be some helpful and progressive outcomes for the Irish association. It has been wonderful to have been provided with this opportunity following the launch of our strategic plan. Once the project is completed





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the YWCA Ireland would very much like to share the learning and tools with our wider YWCA movement and associations across Europe.

The YWCA of Albania

By the YWCA of Albania

December 10 marks a very important date - International Day of Human Rights. On this occasion, 9-10 December 2013, a conference was organised in Hotel Tirana by the Institution of the Ombudsman. The YWCA of Albania took part and contributed by covering the following topics:

- 1 . "Protection of the Rights of the Child"
- 2 . "The Rights of Women"
- 3 . "LGBT Rights"
- 4 . "Feud"
- 5 . "The Rights of Persons with Disabilities"
- 6 . "Minority Rights"

The conference brought together distinguished representatives of the State and various organisations and institutions such as Lord Vangel Dule, Nov / Chairman of the Parliament, Mr. Lord. Alexander Arvizu, the U.S. Ambassador, Ms. Fiorentina Azizi , Representative of the OSCE in Albania , Mr. Gentian Elezi , Deputy / Minister of Integration ; Lindita Nicholas , Minister of Education ; Erion Veliaj , Minister of Social Welfare and Youth ; Mr . Ilir Beqja, Minister of Health and Mr. Taco Xheladin, Chairman of the Federation Roma attended.

There were various discussions including on the rights of Roma people, this is of great importance to the YWCA in the context of our one-year project with UNICEF. The role of parliament for the protection and promotion of the rights of the community, the legislative side nationally and internationally, as well as some of their inclusion practices were all highlighted.



Take Action

Message from the YWCA of Ukraine

Dear YWCA sisters,

We're writing to you with deepest concern and mortification for our country. Ukraine was closer than ever on its way to being part of the European Community and the entire nation strongly desires to take this road. However, the Ukrainian President and government hampered the process and still haven't made its decision in favour of the EU, and are tending to suspend it. The special military forces broke up the peaceful demonstration (most were young people - students) and attacked the people violently. As protests continue we ask that you stand in solidarity with us and raise awareness of the police and military brutality.



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For more information contact: Ulianets Natalia, President of the YWCA of Ukraine
una01@mail.ru

European Youth Foundation

The European Youth Foundation (EYF) is a fund established in 1972 by the Council of Europe to provide financial support for European youth activities. Its purpose is to encourage co-operation among young people in Europe by providing financial support to such European youth activities which serve the promotion of peace, understanding and co-operation in a spirit of respect for the Council of Europe's fundamental values such as human rights, democracy, tolerance and solidarity.

[Click here to for more information.](#)

End Child, Early and Forced Marriage- in a Single Generation

The World YWCA has re-launched their global campaign to End Child, Early and Forced Marriage in a Single Generation. Globally, an estimated 1 in 3 young women aged 20 to 24 is married before the age of 18. If present trends continue, an estimated 142 million girls will be married by their 18th birthday by 2020 (UNFPA 2012). Child marriage is an unacceptable violation of the rights of children, especially adolescent girls, with long term negative consequences on their health and wellbeing.

[Click here to join the campaign](#)

